RM Die Religionen der Menschheit

Michael Tilly/Burton L. Visotzky (Eds.)

Judaism II

Literature

Kohlhammer

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Die Religionen der Menschheit

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Foreword

In the beginning, the Hebrew Bible was formed as an anthology of Jewish texts, each shaping an aspect of Jewish identity. As the Israelite community and its various tribes became two parts: a Diaspora and its complement, the community in the Land of Israel—competing interests formed a canon that represented their various concerns. Over time, the communities grew, interacted, and focused on local religious needs, all the while ostensibly proclaiming fealty to the Jerusalem Temple. Even so, some communities rejected the central shrine that the Torah's book of Deuteronomy proclaimed to be »the place where the Lord chose for His name to dwell« (Deut. 12:5, et passim). Still other Jewish communities had their own competing shrines. Yet for all their dissentions, disagreements, and local politics, there was a common yet unarticulated core of beliefs and practices that unified the early Jewish communities across the ancient world.[1] As the Second Temple period (516 BCE–70 CE) drew to a close, the biblical canon took its final shape, and a world-wide *Jewish* community—no longer Israelite—emerged as a moral and spiritual power.[2]

That canon, by definition, excluded certain Jewish texts, even as it codified others. And the political processes of the Persian and Hellenistic empires confined and defined the polities of their local Jews. From east to west, at the very moment in 70 CE when the centralized Jerusalem cult was reduced to ashes, Judaism, like the mythical phoenix, emerged. Across the oikumene, with each locale finding its own expressions, communities that had formed around the study of the biblical canon produced commentaries, codes, chronicles, commemorations, and compendia about Judaism. Some of these were inscribed on stone, others on parchment and paper, while still others were committed to memory. The devotion to this varied literature helped shape a Jewish culture and history that has persisted for two millennia.

This three-volume compendium, *Judaism: I. History, II. Literature, and III. Culture*, considers various aspects of Jewish expressions over these past two millennia. In this Foreward, we the editors: an American rabbi-professor and an ordained German Protestant university professor, will discuss what led us to choose the chapters in this compendium. Obviously three volumes, even totaling a thousand pages,

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1 The idea of a »common Judaism« remains debated but was introduced by Ed P. Sanders in his *Judaism: Practice and Beliefs, 163 BCE–66 CE* (London, 1992) and embraced as a scholarly consensus in Adele Reinhartz and Wayne McCready, eds., *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second Temple Judaism*, Minneapolis/MN, 2008.

2 See, inter alia, Timothy Lim, *The Formation of the Jewish Canon*, New Haven/CT, 2013.

cannot include consideration of all aspects of a rich and robustly evolving two-thousand-year-old Jewish civilization. And so, we will assay to lay bare our own biases as editors and acknowledge our own shortcomings and those of these volumes, where they are visible to us. To do this we need to have a sense of perspective on the scholarly study of Judaism over the past two centuries.

1 Die Wissenschaft des Judentums

Dr. Leopold Zunz (1794–1886) began the modern study of Judaism by convening his *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* (the Society for the Culture and Critical Study of the Jews) exactly two hundred years ago, in late 1819 in Berlin.[3] Although the *Verein* was small and lasted but five years before disbanding, it included such luminaries as co-founder Eduard Gans, a disciple of Hegel, as well as the poet Heinrich Heine.[4] The scholarly *Verein* failed to gain traction in the larger Jewish community. Nonetheless, Zunz and his German Reform colleagues introduced an academic study of Judaism based upon comparative research and use of non-Jewish sources. Their historical-critical approach to Jewish learning allowed for what had previously been confined to the Jewish orthodox Yeshiva world to eventually find an academic foothold in the university.

In that era, history was often seen as the stories of great men. Spiritual and political biographies held sway. Zunz accepted the challenge with his groundbreaking biography of the great medieval French exegete, »*Salomon ben Isaac, genannt Raschi*.« The work marked the end of the *Verein* and was published in the short-lived *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*.[5] The monographic length of the article and its use of what were then cutting-edge methods ironically helped assure the journal's demise. Further, the attempt to write a biography that might assay to peek behind the myth of the towering medieval figure, assured that the orthodox yeshiva scholars who passionately cared about Rashi would find the work anathema. Nevertheless, the study was a programmatic introduction not only to Rashi, but to the philological and comparative methods of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. It would set a curriculum for critical study of Judaism for the next century and a half.

Zunz solidified his methods and his agenda in 1832, when he published *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt* (The Sermons of the Jews in their Historic Development).[6] Here, Zunz surveyed rabbinic exegetical and homiletical literature, and by focusing on this literature, he conspicuously avoided both the study of the Talmud and Jewish mysticism. Zunz began his survey in the late books

3 Ismar Schorsch, *Leopold Zunz: Creativity in Adversity,* Philadelphia/PA, 2016, 29ff.

4 Both Gans and Heine subsequently converted to Christianity for the ease of cultural assimilation. Schorsch, ibid.

5 *ZWJ* (1823): 277–384; Schorsch, *Zunz*, 42.

6 Berlin, 1832. The work was translated into Hebrew by M. Zack and expanded by Ḥanokh Albeck as *HaDerashot BeYisrael*, reprinted many times by Bialik Publishing: Jerusalem.

of the Hebrew Bible and continued to review the form and content of the genre up to German Reform preaching of his own day. His work was not without bias. Zunz separated what he imagined should be the academic study of Judaism from both the Yeshiva curriculum—primarily Talmud and legal codes—and from the Chassidic world, which had a strong dose of mysticism.

Zunz's acknowledgement of the mystic's yearning for God came in his masterful survey of medieval liturgical poetry, *Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*.[7] Indeed, Jewish mysticism only finally came to be acknowledged in academic circles a century later by the efforts of Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897–1982). Leopold Zunz essentially set the curriculum for the academic study of Judaism until the horrible events of World War II irreparably changed the course of Jewish history and learning. Even so, Zunz's agenda still affects Jewish studies to this day and has influenced the content choices of these volumes.

2 World War II and Vatican II

The world of Jewish academic study had its ups and downs in the century following Zunz. A year after his death, the Jewish Theological Seminary was founded in New York. It continues to be a beacon of Jewish scholarship in the western world. But the shift to America was prescient, as European Jewry as a whole suffered first from the predations of Czarist Russia, then from the decimation of World War I, and finally from the Holocaust of World War II.

The absolute destruction that the Holocaust wrought upon European Jewry cannot be exaggerated. Much of what is described in these volumes came to an abrupt and tragic end. Yet following World War II, two particular events had a dramatic effect on the future of Judaism. Both have some relationship to the attempted destruction of Jewry in Germany during the war, yet each has its own dynamic that brought it to full flowering. We refer to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and the declaration of the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate* document in 1965. The former has been a continual midwife for the rebirth of Jewish culture and literature both within and outside the Diaspora. Of course, there is an entire chapter of this compendium devoted to Israel. The Vatican II document, which revolutionized the Catholic Church's approach to Jews and Judaism, is reckoned with in the final chapter of this work, describing interreligious dialogue in the past seventy years.

3 Jacob Neusner resets the agenda

A graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary's rabbinical school, Jacob Neusner (1932–2016) earned his doctorate with Prof. Morton Smith, who was a former Angli-

7 Berlin, 1855.

can cleric and professor of ancient history at Columbia University.[8] Although they broke bitterly in later years, Neusner imbibed Smith's methodology, which served to undermine the very foundations of Zunz's *Wissenschaft* curriculum. Neusner was exceedingly prolific and succeeded in publishing over 900 books before his death.

Among these was his *A Life of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai: Ca. 1–80 CE*.[9] This work was a conventional biography of one of the founding-fathers of rabbinic Judaism, not unlike Zunz's much earlier work on Rashi. Yet eight years after the publication of the Yoḥanan biography, Neusner recanted this work and embraced Smith's »hermeneutic of suspicion,« publishing *The Development of a Legend: Studies in the Traditions Concerning Yoḥanan ben Zakkai.*[10] With this latter work, Neusner upended the notion of Jewish history as the stories of great men and treated those tales instead as ideological-didactic legends which exhibited a strong religious bias. He and his students continued to publish in this vein until they put a virtual end to the writing of positivist Jewish history.

This revolution came just as Jewish studies was being established as a discipline on American university campuses. For the past half-century, scholars have been writing instead the history of the ancient literature itself, and carefully limning what could and could not be asserted about the Jewish past. Due to Neusner's polemical nature, there has been a fault line between Israeli scholars and those in the European and American Diasporas regarding the reliability of rabbinic sources as evidence for the history of the ancient period, describing the very foundations of rabbinic Judaism.

4 Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Judaism and Hellenism)

Even as this monumental shift in the scholarly agenda was taking place, another significant change affected our understanding of Judaism. This transformation followed from the theological shift evinced by Vatican II and was apposite to the ending of what has been characterized as the Church's millennial »teaching of contempt« for Judaism.[11] European-Christian scholarship had, from the time of the separation of Church and Synagogue,[12] characterized Christianity as the direct inheritor of Greco-Roman Hellenism while Judaism, often derogated as *Spätjudentum*, was portrayed as primitive or even barbarian. In 1969, Martin Hengel (1926–2009) wrote a pathbreaking work of

8 See Aaron W. Hughes, *Jacob Neusner: An American Jewish Iconoclast*, New York, 2016.

9 Leiden, 1962.

10 Leiden, 1970.

11 The phrase was the title of the book by Jules Isaac in the context of Vatican II, idem, *The Teaching of Contempt: The Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism,* New York, 1964.

12 See James Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, London, 1991 and in response Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, TSAJ 95, Tübingen, 2003.

heterodox scholarship exploring the Hellenistic background of Judaism and how it was a seed-bed for subsequent Christian Hellenism.[13]

Hengel himself was relying in part on Jewish scholars such as Saul Lieberman, who wrote in the decades before him of Greek and Hellenism in Jewish Palestine.[14] Lieberman, however, wrote particularly of influences on the literature of the ancient rabbis and targeted his work to scholars of Talmudic literature. Hengel, a German Protestant scholar, wrote for scholars of New Testament, and achieved a much broader reach and influence. Finally, one hundred fifty years after Zunz gathered his Berlin *Verein*, Hengel granted Jewish studies and Judaism itself a seat at the table of Christian faculties, even as he felt that Jewish theology of the ancient period erred in rejecting Jesus.

5 The New Academy

Since Hengel, there has been a vast expansion of Jewish Studies in universities in North America and throughout the world. Today, there is nary a university without Jewish Studies. In part this waxing of Judaica was due to the theological shifts in the Catholic Church and Protestant academy. In part, especially in the US, the explosion of Jewish studies departments was due to a general move towards identity studies that began with women's studies and African-American studies, expanded to include Jewish studies, and other ethnic and religious departments, majors, or concentrations. But Jewish Studies itself has changed in many profound ways. To wit, Christian scholars have also excelled in the field. At the time of this writing, the president of the Association for Jewish Studies, Prof. Christine Hayes of Yale University, is the first non-Jew to lead the organization in its 51-year history. Similarly, Peter Schäfer served as Perelman professor of Judaic Studies at Princeton University for fifteen years, having previously served as professor for Jewish Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin (1983–2008). Both Schäfer and Hayes specialize in Talmud scholarship. By this focus, we highlight not so much the anomaly of a gentile studying Talmud, as it is a sign of the integration of Jewish Studies into the broader academy. Indeed, as early as 1961, the late Rabbi Samuel Sandmel served as president of the otherwise overwhelmingly Christian membership of the Society for Biblical Literature.

6 Kohlhammer's *Die Religionen der Menschheit*

Since 1960, Kohlhammer in Stuttgart has published the prestigious series *Die Religionen der Menschheit* (The Religions of Humanity). While the series was originally conceived of as thirty-six volumes almost 60 years ago, today it extends to fifty

13 Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jahrhunderts vor Christus,* WUNT 10, Tübingen, 1969.

14 Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine,* New York, 1942 and idem, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, New York, 1950.

plus volumes, covering virtually all aspects of world-religions. That said, a disproportionate number of the volumes (often made up of multi-book publications) are devoted to Christianity. This is unsurprising, given Kohlhammer's location in a German-Lutheran orbit.

In the earliest round of publication, Kohlhammer brought out a one-volume *Israelitische Religion* (1963, second edition: 1982), which covered Old Testament religion. This also demonstrated Kohlhammer's essentially Christian worldview. By separating Israelite religion from Judaism, it implies that Israelite religion might lead the way to Christianity; viz. that the Old Testament would be replaced by the New. Its author was Christian biblical theologian Helmer Ringgren.

In 1994, though, Kohlhammer began to address the appearance of bias with its publication of a one-volume (526 pp) work *Das Judentum*, Judaism. Although it was edited by German Christian scholar Günter Mayer, (who specialized in rabbinic literature), and had contributions by Hermann Greive, who was also a non-Jew; the work featured contributions by three notable rabbis: Jacob Petuchowski, Phillip Sigal, and especially Leo Trepp. German born, Rabbi Trepp was renown as the last surviving rabbi to lead a congregation in Germany.

In its current iteration, twenty-five years later, this edition of *Judaism* is a three-volume, 1000-page compendium with contributions by thirty experts in all areas of Judaism, from the destruction of the Second Temple and the advent of rabbinic Judaism, until today. We, the co-editors, are Dr. Burton L. Visotzky, Ph.D., a rabbi who serves as the Appleman Professor of Midrash and Interreligious Studies at New York's Jewish Theological Seminary. The other co-editor is Dr. Michael Tilly, a Protestant minister, Professor of New Testament and head of the Institute of Ancient Judaism and Hellenistic Religions at Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen.

Further, the individual chapter authors are a mix, albeit uneven, of men and women (our initial invitations were to the same number of women as men, but as will be apparent, the final number favors men over women). And there are more Jews than Christians writing for these three volumes, although we confess to not actually knowing the religion of each individual participant. Scholars from seven countries make up the mix, with a preponderance of North-Americans; there are also many Germans, Israelis and then, scholars from England, France, Austria, and Poland. We are not entirely sure what this distribution means, except perhaps that the publisher and one of the editors is German, the other editor is American, and the largest number of Jewish studies scholars are located in America and Israel. The relative paucity of Europeans indicates the slow recovery from World War II, even as we celebrate the reinvigoration of Jewish Studies in Europe.

In this volume devoted to Literature, we survey the written production of the Jews over the past two millennia. This includes works that were transmitted orally, such as the earliest rabbinic compendia: the Mishnah and the Talmud, which were later inscribed in the Middle Ages (post 900 CE). The authors of each of these chapters are experts in their individual field and offer to the reader a basic introduction to the various works and the scholarly issues related to their study.

It is not our intention to declare a canon of Jewish literature. Rather, we are attempting to survey the major books and the influence each has had upon the Jewish people. Some of the literature we survey represents distinct minorities within the broader Jewish world. Others are actually heterodox. But all told, they represent the broad range of Jewish thought and writing throughout the centuries.

The Jewish Bible: Traditions and Translations

Emanuel Tov

1 The Transmission of Hebrew Scripture in Jewish Channels

What are Jewish and non-Jewish sources? TeNaKh = ***T****orah* (Pentateuch) + ***N****evi'im* (Prophets) + ***K****etuvim* (Writings) is the Jewish Scripture that has come down to us from antiquity in a complex way. Like other ancient compositions, it was first put into writing in antiquity on papyrus or skins of leather and subsequently copied, generation after generation, until the invention of printing. The process of the development between the stage of the first writing of the text until the stage of the printed text is named the transmission of the text, and that stage was very complex. There were many reasons for this complexity. The first stage of writing was preceded by a stage of oral transmission that often created several versions of the same event that were eventually committed to writing. The transmission was also complex because early scribes allowed themselves the freedom of changing the text in many large and small details. All these complications created slightly different copies of the same scriptural book.

The traditional Jewish »Bible« as we know it today from Hebrew texts and modern translations represents one of the early text traditions to be described below. Textual criticism is the discipline that deals with the textual history of the Bible, but it sometimes also pertains to the history of the literary forms.

There is no such thing as the »main text« of the Bible, since all the texts to be described below may be named »the Bible.« For practical purposes we may consider the traditional or Masoretic Text (MT, see § 2) the central text, since that is the sacred or authoritative text accepted by all streams of Judaism from the first century CE onwards (see below). It also has become the authoritative text of the Bible in its Hebrew form for the Protestant world, and it is the central text for the scholarly world. But the Septuagint (LXX, see § 4) is equally as much »the Bible« as the MT. That text, originally a Jewish translation of Hebrew Scripture, served subsequently as the sacred text of Christianity; until at a certain point it was replaced by the Latin Vulgate translation. The Dead Sea Scrolls do not have an authoritative status in the modern world, but for the Qumran community they were authoritative between the first century BCE until the end of their existence in 73 CE. The Samaritan Scripture (Samaritan Pentateuch, henceforth SP), based on ancient scrolls, is another Scripture text in Hebrew, limited to the Torah. In short, all forms of the Hebrew and translated Bible that were accepted as authoritative by a

given community should be considered »Bible,« as each community accepted a different form of that Bible as authoritative.

What then is the »Jewish Bible«? Before the first century CE, all forms of Hebrew and translated Scripture may be considered the »Jewish Bible,« but after that period the situation was changed due to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE causing major changes in the use of the Scripture texts (see § 2.1.c below). From that time onwards, only a single text form was considered to be the Jewish Bible. This was the Masoretic Text, accepted by all streams of Judaism as the authoritative Jewish Bible. The Hebrew manuscripts of this tradition were augmented with a layer of vocalization and musical notes (*teʿamim*) between the eighth and eleventh century.

The variety of the different forms of the Jewish Bible before the 1st century of the Common Era created a special situation. At that time the Jewish people, to some extent organized in different groups, mainly the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, held on to manifold forms of the Scripture books, but all of them were considered to be a Jewish Bible. Below we will describe the early proto-Masoretic scrolls from the Judean Desert as well as many other Judean Desert scrolls, mainly the Qumran scrolls. Initially also the Septuagint was considered a Jewish Bible in translation, produced in Greek, around 285 BCE for the Torah, and most of the other early Greek versions were Jewish as well. The Aramaic Targumim were Jewish par excellence. Even the source of the Samaritan Pentateuch originally served as a Jewish Bible until the Samaritans distanced themselves from the other Jews. We turn now to sort out this history of various biblical texts.

2 The Traditional Hebrew Text of the Bible: The Masoretic Text

The Masoretic Text (MT), whether in its consonantal form or its fuller, later form, is the commonly used version of the Hebrew Bible, considered authoritative by Jews for almost two millennia. In modern times, the MT is found all over. Even if one thinks that one does not know what MT is or where to find it, one cannot miss it, so to speak, because MT is found in multiple sources.

All the printed editions of the Hebrew Bible and most of its modern translations present a form of MT. From the invention of the printing press, all editions of the Hebrew Bible have been based on a form of MT, with the exception of publications of the Samaritan Pentateuch or eclectic editions.[1]

The roots of MT and its popularity go back to the first century of the Common Era. Before that period, only the proto-rabbinic (Pharisaic) movement made use of MT, while other streams in Judaism used other Hebrew textual traditions. In other

1 Eclectic editions are modern Bible editions that reconstruct a scholar's vision of the original text of the Hebrew Bible, such as the series *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament, A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text, Printed in Colors, with Notes*, ed. Paul Haupt, Leipzig, 1893–1904.

words, before the first century of the Common Era, we witness a textual plurality among Jews, with multiple text forms conceived of as »Bible,« or Scripture, including the Hebrew source of the Septuagint (LXX) Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which began as the biblical text for Greek speaking Hellenistic Jews.

Around the turn of the Common Era, the consonantal proto-MT text was accepted as an authoritative form of Hebrew Scripture by the proto-rabbinic movement, whereas other forms were accepted as authoritative by other groups.

With the advent of Christianity in the first century CE, the LXX, which began as the biblical text for Greek speaking Hellenistic Jews, was accepted as holy writ by the new group of early Christians, and was concomitantly dropped by Greek-speaking Jews and ceased to be considered authoritative scripture by them. Somewhat earlier, the Samaritans created the version of the Torah known as the Samaritan Pentateuch, while the Qumran community, which had assembled texts of different types, ceased to exist.

Thus, since the first century CE, the consonantal proto-MT and subsequently the full MT version of scripture, including all the books that are contained in it, was accepted as authoritative by all streams of the Jewish people. This text is the only text quoted in rabbinic literature (the small deviations are negligible) and Karaite works,[2] and it is the only text used by organized Judaism for the past two millennia. The Samaritans embraced their own holy writ, the Pentateuch only (§ 2.5.a below).

2.1 The Medieval Masoretic Text and Its Forerunner, Proto-MT

MT includes five elements, of which the consonants and the elements around the text had been transmitted from previous generations (the proto-MT). The other elements were added later by the Masoretes:

1. The consonantal framework, i.e., the letters of the text without any additions;
2. Vocalization, i.e. the vowels that were added to the written text based on oral traditions. Written vocalization signs only started to appear in the eighth century, with the work of the Masoretes, though according to tradition they were already there as an oral tradition accompanying the written Torah.
3. Para-textual elements, i.e., elements added to the written text, such as *Ketiv-Qere* readings[3] and the division of the text into paragraphs;
4. Accentuation (*teʿamim* or trope), the signs that added a musical dimension to the consonants and vowels. At the same time, the accents also indicated the relation between the words;
5. The Masorah, an apparatus of instructions for the writing and reading of the biblical text. The Masorah is a product of the early Middle Ages.

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2 Karaite Judaism, as distinct from rabbinic Judaism, does not accept the oral tradition, and therefore not the Talmud.

3 For an explanation of the *Ketiv–Qere* procedure, see below, § 3.8.

The principal component of MT, however, that of the letters, was in existence more than a thousand years before the complete MT. As noted above, scholars usually designate this consonantal base of the Masoretic Text as *proto-Masoretic*.[4]

2.1.1 Proto-MT and the Judean Desert Texts

Before the discovery of ancient scrolls in the Judean Desert (the Dead Sea Scrolls), scholars were not aware that MT existed in the same consonantal form as early as the last centuries BCE.[5] But detailed comparisons of the various forms of the Judean Desert texts with the consonantal text of MT–putting aside the vocalization, accentuation, and other elements of MT dating to the medieval period–reveals that an ancient group of manuscripts from the Second Temple Period is virtually identical to MT.

We find a striking difference between the Judean Desert scrolls from places other than Qumran and the Qumran scrolls, where most of the scrolls were found. The Qumran scrolls display textual diversity, while the twenty-five texts that were found in the Judean Desert at sites other than Qumran display almost complete identity (roughly 98% agreement) in consonants with the medieval Masoretic text (as reflected in the earliest complete version of MT, called the Leningrad Codex; see discussion below).

The non-Qumran Judean Desert scrolls were found at both the earlier site of Masada (written between 50 BCE and 30 CE)[6] and the later sites of Wadi Murabbaʿat, Wadi Sdeir, Naḥal Ḥever, Naḥal ʿArugot, and Naḥal Seʾelim, dating to the period of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132–135 CE. The latter were copied between 20 and 115 CE.

4QGen[b], officially labeled as a Qumran text probably deriving from one of the Judean Desert sites needs to be added to this group, as well as the recently opened En-Gedi scroll which agrees with codex L in *all* of its details. It is fair to say that we have access to only a very small percentage of proto-MT manuscripts.

The virtual identity between the early scrolls and the medieval texts can be seen best in an examination of the well-preserved texts such as:[7]

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4 The terms proto-rabbinic and rabbinic are used less frequently, although they actually describe the nature of MT and its forerunners more precisely.

5 These proto-MT texts were not the only texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

6 Especially MasPs[a] and MasLev[b]. All the dates assigned to Judean Desert scrolls are based on paleographic arguments and carbon-14 dating.

7 For an analysis, see Ian Young, »The Stabilization of the Biblical Text in the Light of Qumran and Masada: A Challenge for Conventional Qumran Chronology?«, *DSD* 9 (2002): 364–90. Young records the number of variants from MT (Leningrad Codex) included in each text. He demonstrates the clear difference between the Qumran scrolls as somewhat remote from MT, and those from the other Judean Desert sites as identical to MT. See also Armin Lange, »The Textual Plurality of Jewish Scriptures in the Second Temple Period in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,« in *Qumran and the Bible: Studying the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,* ed. Nora David and Armin Lange, CBET 57, Leuven, 2010, 43–96.

- The Masada Psalms scroll copy a (MasPs[a]) dating to the end of the 1st century BCE, and containing one complete and two fragmentary columns.
- The Masada Leviticus scroll copy b (MasLev[b]) dating to 30 BCE–30 CE, and containing five fragmentary columns.
- The Psalms scroll from cave 5/6 in Naḥal Ḥever (5/6ḤevPs) dating to 50–68 CE, and containing twelve fragmentary columns.
- The Murabbaʿat scroll of the Minor Prophets (MurXII) dating to *ca.* 115 CE and containing major parts of these books in 21 columns.
- The En-Gedi scroll of Leviticus chapters 1–2, ascribed to the 1st–2nd century CE as shown by Segal et al.[8]

This last text was deciphered and published only in 2016, and although its evidence is fragmentary, it was the first time an ancient text agreed *entirely* with the consonantal medieval text.

The other Judean texts of the same type differ in a few details, but never more than the medieval texts differ among each other. The categories of differences pertain to details of spelling, small linguistic differences, and minute content differences. Thus, the relationship between MT and the ancient Judean Desert texts is one of almost complete identity showing that the consonantal framework of MT changed very little over the course of one thousand years—the period between the scrolls and the earliest medieval codices.

2.1.2 The Socio-religious Background of the Judean Desert Texts

The biblical texts found in Judean Desert sites outside of Qumran always represent proto-MT and those found in Qumran never do (with the sole exception of one *tefillin* [phylactery], 8QPhyl I). The key to understanding the background of this sharp difference lies in the correlation between the texts and the socio-religious background of the archeological sites.

Both the earlier site of Masada (scrolls written between 50 BCE and 30 CE) and the later Bar Kokhba sites (scrolls written between 20 BCE and 115 CE) in contradistinction with Qumran, were used by people (i.e. the Masada and Bar Kokhba freedom fighters) who closely followed the guidance of pre-rabbinic leaders in religious matters; thus they used exclusively the proto-Masoretic text embraced by that spiritual leadership.[9] A close link between the Rabbis and the proto-Masoretic text is also reflected in the content of the *tefillin* (phylacteries) from the Judean Desert written in the MT style that reflect the instructions of the rabbis preserved in later rabbinic texts.

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8 Michael Segal et al., »An Early Leviticus Scroll from En-Gedi: Preliminary Publication,« *Textus* 26 (2016): 1–30.

9 It is remarkable that these proto-MT scrolls were found in these unconnected sites. Some scholars suggest priestly influence on the leadership of the revolts.

Although the Qumran texts display a wide textual variety, proto-MT does not appear there.[10]

2.1.3 The Origins of the Proto-MT

Many scholars suggest that after several centuries of textual plurality, a period of uniformity and stability can be discerned within Judaism at the end of the 1st century CE. However, the Qumran texts were hidden in caves, and SP (Samaritan Pentateuch) and LXX, both deviating much from MT, were cherished by *non*-rabbinic religious groups. At that time, the Hebrew and translated texts used within rabbinic Judaism only reflect MT. This situation is usually explained as reflecting a conscious effort to *stabilize* the Scripture text, and as the creation of a *standard* text for Palestine as a whole by the rabbinic Jewish leadership. In this context, the terms stabilization and standardization are often used.

The difference between the sites is not chronological, but socio-religious.[11] In other words, at the same time different groups made use of different texts, and this trend continued over time, but these groups either split off from Judaism (Christians and Samaritans) or disappeared (Qumran group), leaving the group that used proto-MT as the only remaining Jewish group. Thus, their version of Scripture became the only version left after the destruction of the Second Temple, and this version became the only version that was used by all streams of Judaism.

2.1.4 How the Proto-MT Was Created

In many ways, the origin of MT remains enigmatic. This text is far from being unified or consistent in its spelling and other editorial characteristics. Through the generations the MT scribes copied their scrolls faithfully, but these scrolls inherited an earlier tradition that was not always precise or consistent. The variation in the nature and quality of the texts that ended up being included strongly implies that there was no selection process of manuscripts for inclusion in the archetype of MT.[12] There probably was only one candidate for inclusion in the archetype of MT for each text. The persons who created the archetype were, for the most part,

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10 Nevertheless, some Qumran texts are close to MT (for example, 1QIsa^{b}, 4QJer^{a,c}), differing in up to 10% of their words from (proto-)MT. I have named these texts »MT-like« and they belong to the same larger text family that contains proto-MT.

11 Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd rev. and exp. ed., Minneapolis/MN, 2012, 174–80.

12 Thus Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture,* London, 1979, 103: »The most obvious implication to be drawn from this history of the pre-stabilization period is that the subsequent status accorded MT did not derive necessarily from its being the best, or the most original, Hebrew text. Its choice as the canonical text was determined often by broad sociological factors and internal religious conflicts (cf. Geiger), and not by scholarly textual judgments.«

unaware of differences between scrolls and did not pay attention to the small details under scrutiny in this study,[13] otherwise the specific MT text of Samuel, for instance, with its many errors as compared to the Qumran and LXX versions, would not have been included.

In this corpus we find books of different types. Large books, such as Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, and Psalms, consisting of several smaller scrolls, could coincidentally be combined from scrolls of a different textual nature. Thus, in only two of the five books of Psalms in MT[14] the main divine appellation is *elohim*, while in the other three books it is *YHWH*. In this way also, Jeremiah 27–29 differs from the remainder of the book.

The same processes happened in the creation of the archetype of the LXX, whose books differ much from one another. For example, the various segments of the books of Samuel-Kings are of a divergent nature.[15] We note that in a corpus that developed over the course of such a long period, internal differences such as those in the LXX and MT are to be expected.

2.2 The Scribes of the Proto-Masoretic Text and Their Practices

The practices of the proto-MT scribes (including the scribes that preceded them) as well as those of the medieval scribes of MT are better known than that of other scribes. This happened not only because there are many more copies of the medieval MT than of any other text of Scripture, but also because proto-MT scribes as a group (i.e., not individually named scribes) are often mentioned in rabbinic literature (viz. *Soferim*).

When focusing on the scribes, we refer to their general approach to the text that may be examined with the aid of such criteria as precision, number of mistakes, amount of scribal intervention in the text (corrections, additions and erasures in the text), and the approach to orthography. Included in this group are the scribes of the proto-MT scrolls, the scribes of the medieval scrolls and manuscripts, and the scribes of the texts preceding the proto-Masoretic texts. The scribes of the proto-MT texts from the Judean Desert are well known because they display individual features and they have been well studied.

An important criterion that can be examined for the MT group and not for the other texts is to what extent the scribes changed the texts from which they were copied. This cannot be examined for most texts since we do not know their *Vorlagen*

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13 See Emanuel Tov, »The Coincidental Textual Nature of the Collections of Ancient Scriptures,« in idem, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint: Collected Essays, Vol.* 3, VTSup 167, Leiden, 2015, 20–35.

14 Psalms 42–72 (book 2) and Psalms 73–89 (book 3). The book of Psalms is divided in five unequal parts, each of which was probably once copied on a separate scroll. Each »book« ended with a benediction, e.g. Ps 89:53.

15 See the study quoted in n. 13.

(i.e., the texts that preceded them from which the scribes were copying), but for the proto-MT texts we think that we know a little more. After all, since these texts display the same text as the medieval MT, by implication they copied their *Vorlagen* precisely.

2.2.1 Precision Copying

Part of the explanation for the virtual lack of differences between the copies of MT in early times and through the centuries, may be found in rabbinic traditions regarding precision in the copying of scrolls: the existence of master copies of the Torah books in the Temple Court,[16] and the correction procedure of scrolls according to these master copies. On the basis of these traditions, it may be postulated that the Judean Desert scrolls were in fact »corrected copies« that circulated in ancient Israel.

2.2.2 Rabbinic Traditions about the Use of Corrected Scrolls

The precision of the scribes of proto-MT is often mentioned in the rabbinic literature and this information exactly fits the scribes of proto-MT. On several occasions, rabbinic literature mentions a »corrected scroll« (*sefer mugah*).[17] Furthermore, according to later rabbinic tradition, the Temple employed professional »correctors« whose task it was to safeguard precision in the copying of the text (*b. Ketub.* 106a):[18] »Correctors (*maggihim*) of books in Jerusalem received their fees from the Temple funds.«

This description implies that the correcting procedure based on the master copies in the Temple was financed from the Temple resources that thus approved of the copying procedure. This was the only way to safeguard the proper distribution of precise copies of Scripture. These scrolls must have been used throughout the land of Israel, for public reading as well as for instruction, public and private, as suggested by *b. Pes* 112a, where one of the five instructions of R. Akiba to his student R. Simeon was: »And when you teach your son, teach him from a corrected scroll.« Another such precise copy was the »Scroll of the King,« which accompanied

16 See *y. Taan* 4.68a and parallels, and see the discussion in Emanuel Tov, »The Text of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek Bible Used in the Ancient Synagogues,« in idem, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays,* TSAJ 121, Tübingen, 2008, 171–88. The tradition about the presence of a master copy of the Torah in the Temple Court is not a historical fact, but is supported by similar evidence from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Furthermore, the textual unity described above has to start somewhere, and the assumption of a master copy is therefore necessary.

17 See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 30; Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine,* New York, 1962, 185–87.

18 Here and elsewhere the Babylonian Talmud preserved many valuable ancient customs about scribal traditions.

the king wherever he went. *y. Sanh* 2.20c and *Sifre* Deuteronomy 160[19] tell us that this scroll was corrected to »the copy in the Temple Court in accordance with the court of seventy-one members.« The »Scroll of the King« may well be an imaginary scroll and its description may be equally imaginary, but the reality for which it accounts, namely a practice of correcting scrolls from master copies, fits the reality of the copies of proto-MT and the precision of its scribes. In my view, the Judean Desert texts that are closely related to MT may well have been corrected copies.

2.3 The Forerunners of the Proto-Masoretic Text

2.3.1 Precise Transmission of Inconsistent Spelling

The aforementioned precision with which the proto-MT text was copied is not contradicted by the inconsistency of MT in orthography (spelling). Since the generations prior to those of the proto-MT scribes created an inconsistent text in matters of spelling, it was precisely this inconsistent spelling that was transmitted exactly to the next generations.

The lack of internal consistency within proto-MT pertaining to the insertion of the so-called *matres lectionis*, the vowel letters אהו"י (*aleph*, *heh*, *waw*, *yod*) that were inserted gradually in the Hebrew language in the course of the centuries to assist readers, is visible in the following two areas: Differences between the relatively defective orthographic practice of the majority of the biblical books and the fuller orthography of the late books Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Qohelet, and Esther.

2.3.2 Internal differences within the various books

It is clear that for ancient scribes, consistency in the use of these vowel letters was not as important as it was in later centuries. The lack of unity in proto-MT is further shown by examples of inconsistency in the spelling of words appearing in the same context or belonging to the same grammatical category, and of unusual spellings. This inconsistency also characterizes the textual traditions of the Samaritan Pentateuch, the so-called Qumran Scribal Practice of many Qumran scrolls, and most individual Qumran scrolls. The following examples bring this inconsistency to light:

Feminine plural ending *-ot* in the participle *qtl(w)t,* e.g. שמר(ו)ת.

A computer sampling shows that these forms are written with the full spelling of the final syllable in 22.4% of all instances in the Torah, while in 100% of them in the Writings (ketuvim).

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19 Louis Finkelstein, *Sifre on Deuteronomy. Critical Edition with Notes*, New York/Jerusalem, 1969, 211.

The spelling of words belonging to the same grammatical pattern appearing in one context. An example is Ezek 32:29 ירדי בור as opposed to v. 30 יורדי בור (with the added letter *waw*).

Many words appear in different spellings in the same context. An example is Judg 1:19 וירש compared with ויורש in the next verse.

Unusual spellings such as:

- מצתי (usual form: מצאתי) in Num 11:11
- ההלכוא (usual form: אשר הלכו) in Josh 10:24.

We do not know anything about the forerunners of MT, because we have no written evidence. However, from MT we can extrapolate their existence, and they tell us something about the scribes of MT. The scribes of the MT texts precisely copied their texts as we can see from:

1. The fact that a large number of texts remained unchanged over the course of 2000 years;
2. The exact copying of scribal features (see below, 2.3.3 on Scribal Marks). At the same time, other features seem to contradict this image of precision, namely
3. Inconsistent spellings.
4. Frequent mistakes in MT in certain sections.[20]

Conditions (1) and (2) apply only if the scribes of MT started applying their rigid precision in copying a text that *already* contained the features described as (3) and (4).

2.3.3 Scribal Marks

The forerunners of the proto-MT scribes used several marks to communicate scribal information to later scribes. These practices were not invented by them for the copying of specifically biblical texts, but were used also in many of the biblical and nonbiblical texts found in the Judean Desert, including texts that did not have a Masoretic character.

Despite the intention of the original scribes who made these marks, the scribes of MT sanctified the totality of the written surface of the texts they copied, and thus included these scribal marks, such as:

Puncta Extraordinaria

MT includes scribal dots under or above letters serving to denote letters that had been deleted by the scribes, as often occurring in the Dead Sea Scrolls. These dots were meant to delete details in the text because it was technically difficult to erase

20 The first chapters in 1 Samuel (when compared with the LXX and 4QSam[a]) and in 2 Sam 22//Ps 18 and 2 Sam 23//1 Chron 11.

letters in a leather scroll, and these dots were not meant to be copied to the next scroll.

Because of the extreme care taken in copying MT, the dots that appeared in the text from which the proto-MT text was copied were now included in the new copies through the medieval texts and our printed editions.

These dots had to be reinterpreted by the Masoretic tradition and they were now considered doubtful letters. Named »special dots« (*puncta extraordinaria*) within the Masoretic tradition, these dots, above the letters, show the strength of that tradition in preserving the smallest scribal details. For example:

Lot's Older Daughter—MT has a dot over the *waw* of וּבְקוּמָהּ (»and when she arose«) in Gen 19:33, which refers to when Lot's older daughter arose after cohabiting with her father. The rabbis suggest that the dot teaches that although the verse says, »he was not aware of her lying or rising« he was, in fact, aware of her rising. This makes his agreement to drink until intoxicated the next night much more problematic. The original meaning of the dot was simply to erase the letter and make the spelling defective, as it is with the description of the younger daughter rising in v. 35.

Esau's Kiss—Another example is the dots above the complete word וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ (»and he kissed him«) in Gen 33:4, which refers to Esau's kissing of Jacob after the latter returns to Canaan. The rabbis suggest that the kiss was pretended or even that Esau tried to bite Jacob. The dots more likely indicate that the word should be erased, although the original reason for this erasure is unknown. The word could have been lacking in another manuscript to which the text was compared.

Inverted Nunim

The so-called inverted *nunim* found in manuscripts and printed editions before and after Num 10:35–36, are actually misunderstood scribal signs for the removal of inappropriate segments, viz., the Greek letters *antisigma* [Ↄ] and *sigma* [C], known from Alexandria and the Qumran scrolls. The inverted *nunim* in this place indicated that these verses (the »Song of the Ark«) did not appear in their correct place.[21]

These examples highlight the method of the MT scribes who believed everything in the text needed to be copied »as is.« Since these details were not meant to be copied into a subsequent text, the fact that the MT scribes did so is important evidence for understanding their approach.

2.4 Key Characteristics of the Masoretic Text

Sometimes it is difficult to define even the simplest things in life. All scriptural texts are compared to MT, but we do not usually ask ourselves what MT itself is. Here I will proceed to describe some of the key characteristics of MT in the area

21 See *'Abot R. Natan* A, 34; p. 51 in Schechter's edition; cf. *y. Pes* 9.36d.

of spelling and other features of the text. We focus on the external features of the text as distinct from their content.

2.4.1 Consistency in Spelling

Above, we focused on aspects of the inconsistent spelling of MT. Here we note that despite these inconsistencies, the Masoretic corpus should be taken as constituting one organic unit because in a number of features, early and late books reflect the same practice in contrast to other texts, mainly those found at Qumran. Thus, it is remarkable that the following words are consistently spelled defectively in MT starting with the proto-MT scrolls and this same defective spelling is found in the proto-MT scrolls as well:

1. /o/ sounds in מאד, כל, משה,[22] כח, כהן, אלהים
2. /o/ sounds in the same word pattern:[23] קדש,אהל, בקר חדש
3. the archaic form of the name of Jerusalem as ירושלם[24]
4. /u/ sound in נאם

Likewise, it is remarkable that the following words are always spelled with full spelling (plene):

1. נביא in the singular.
2. The word מדוע.[25]
3. The pattern *qatol* (vowels a–o), e.g., טהור, כבוד,[26] שלום.[27]
4. The full spelling of the name פינחס is notable.[28]

These spelling practices most likely were developed first for the writing of the Torah, and were adopted from there to the writing of the later books.

2.4.2 Diversity

The internal diversity in MT described above should not surprise us, since the other collections of the Hebrew and translated Bible, such as the LXX, Peshitta (the Syriac Bible translation) and the Targumim (the Aramaic Bible translations), also are not unified. This lack of unity of the scriptural corpora was created by the

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22 With the exception of Dan 11:6; Exod 32:11; Lev 26:20 (all: כוח).
23 The only exception is Dan 11:30 קודש.
24 With the exception of Jer 26:18; Esth 2:6; 1 Chron 3:5; 2 Chron 25:1.
25 With the exception of Ezek 18:19.
26 In MT, כבוד is almost always plene (177x). With suffixes or in the construct state, it is mainly defective (12x).
27 שלום is almost always *plene* (197x), but in twelve instances it is defective, mainly with suffixes.
28 פנחס in 1 Sam 1:3 is an exception.